In-Person Learning: Research on Elementary Models

The work of planning to reopen schools is complex but critical to the academic and social-emotional well-being of our students and school communities. Thank you for bringing the best thinking to this work! This information and resources aim to provide guidance to school teams and specifically the Reopen Community Corps as they engage in the difficult conversations on how to best reopen their school to support in-person learning.

A Planning Framework

Education Resource Strategies has published a helpful planning framework for preparing to bring students back into schools: **Decision Points for COVID Comeback Models**. The information below is formatted to go along with the process identified in the Decision Points Guide, providing DCPS-specific information for five steps. This document is primarily focused on providing information to help with step 4, determining models:

1. Identifying Guiding Principles
2. Identifying students to be served in fully in-person and fully-remote models
3. Gathering operational data to identify constraints
4. **Determine models**
5. Design schedule and staffing

Step 1: DCPS Guiding Principles and Baseline Expectations

The following DCPS principles and expectations should guide your planning work. The deck with expectations and principles is located on the DCPS Way here.

- **Safety:** Safety of students and staff is paramount. All DCPS health and safety protocols outlined must be adhered to (for example, cohorts of students remain together). More detail in step #3 Operational Constraints.
- **Students:** Expectations are designed to open in-person learning first for students who have significant barriers to success with virtual learning. Schools should meet family demand for student seats (thoughtfully designed use of CARE or In-Person Learning) up to the capacity of the school. More detail in step #2, Student Selection.
- **Talent:** Teachers will work directly with students in-person, including self-contained (In-Person Learning Classes). Other Staff members will be able to work with groups of students learning virtually at school (CARE Classes)
- **Schedule:** In person students must remain in cohorts in school buildings. Preserving live instructional time (in-person and virtual) should be prioritized—all students must have access to at least 4 days of live instruction. Students will continue to follow the DCPS curriculum and continue to receive instruction in all content areas. Students must continue to receive their specialized instruction and EL services regardless of model.
- ***Reopen Community Corp Key Question: Are there additional guiding principles that meet these baseline expectations and address our school's unique goals?***

Step 2: Identifying students - DCPS considerations

- District-wide, DCPS identified the following groups as both far from opportunity and experiencing barriers to success in virtual instruction: homeless students, students in SPED self-contained programs, English Learners, and students at risk for other reasons.

- Within the offered grade levels and classes at a school, <u>students who have already been offered a seat must be offered a seat first</u>; new seat offers will be provided in order of the existing selection methodology (may include offering from the current waitlist and/or school-based discretion)
- Schools, with their deeper knowledge of individual student circumstances, may want to define additional guidelines for selection that can be equitably applied.
- Schools may also determine which grade levels and classrooms to open based on need and demand.
- ***Reopen Community Corp Key Question: What do we want to prioritize when considering which grades/classrooms to open for in-person learning (IPL) and CARE Classrooms for Term 3 in our school?***

Step 3: Gathering operational data to identify constraints

DCPS has worked with DC Health and the Office of State Superintendent of Education to understand and describe the operational constraints for bringing students and staff into the buildings. Most relevant to the development of models are the following constraints:

- Students must be in cohorts that remain intact throughout the entirety of in-person learning.
- There will be no more than 12 people in a cohort, with an additional 1 adult allowed to join the cohort from time to time for in person support, observation, etc. This means, at maximum, 11 students, one teacher (see grade level class caps below).
- Students who require a dedicated aide or nurse must be afforded this service. If a student who requires this service receives a seat, the overall student count must be reduced according to health guidance.
- Staff should not interact regularly with more than two cohorts of students in-person. Staff who need to teach more than two groups of students should remain fully virtual (e.g. art teachers, music teachers etc). Exceptions include Health and PE teachers teaching outdoors.
- Related service providers who offer in-person services may push into self-contained classes or pull from grade level cohorts. RSPs will not push into more than two cohorts on a school day; services will be provided in accordance with health guidance and with individual considerations.
- For complete DCPS guidance, see COVID-19 Health Guidelines and Operations Planning on the Term 2 Reopening Website (particularly the return to work webinar) and the FAQs and other resources at dcpsreopenstrong.com.

Step 4: Determine the Models – Options for Consideration

Based on initial research and feedback, and in alignment with the information in Steps 1-3, DCPS has defined several models for providing in-person learning to different groups of students. All of these models have both benefits and challenges and some may work better in different contexts. The sections below provide information and key considerations about each model. Every model requires trade-offs and schools can think through what they need to prioritize. Schools can use these models to create a school-specific plan, sometimes combining models, to account for staffing and physical space limitations. Schools may also present an alternative model for approval, so long as it is in alignment with all aspects of the guiding principles, students' identification, and operational constraints outlined in this document.

Model A: One Teacher Instructs One Cohort All Week	Model B: One Teacher Instructs In-Person and Virtually All Week (Often with Support Staff)	Model C: Two Teachers Rotate to Instruct 2 Days In-Person and 3 Days Virtually	Model D: One Teacher Instructs 2 Cohorts of Students (In-Person and Virtual)
Students come to school 4 or 4.5 days per week for all instruction. The teacher is responsible for the	Students come to school 4 or 4.5 days per week. Students learn content simultaneously either at	Students come to school 4 days per week and have two teachers (e.g. humanities/STEM or	Students come to school 2 days per week (M/T or Th/F). Their teacher teaches A cohort in person

virtual students all subjects up to the class cap. *All other students would be instructed virtually by other teachers.*	home or in-person from the same teacher. Teacher teaches their whole class with some students reporting in school and the rest participating virtually.	English/Spanish). Each teacher teaches in-person 2 days and virtually 3 days. *Teachers instruct other half of cohort virtually.*	M/T and B cohort Th/F. The days the students are not in school they engage in the Model B (Simulcast) with their teacher.

Model A: One Teacher Instructs One Cohort All Week

Overview

4.5-day in-person for high-need students, who are offered in-person seats in no larger than 11-student classes (see grade level cap below), and 100% virtual learning for all other students. In-person students will come to school every day, with a half-day on Wednesdays.

- In-person general education teachers teach all core subjects to one group
- The 8-11 students are the only students in person teachers will be responsible for teaching (see class caps below)
- Teachers teaching in person come to school every day, with a 1/2 day for planning/PD on Wednesday

Best For:

- Prioritizing high-needs students as first group to return to in-person school
- Schools with smaller class sizes
- Grade levels where teachers are non-departmentalized or there are teachers skilled in teaching all content areas

Advantages

- Small class-size instruction for highest need students; reducing opportunity gaps for these students. Teachers who will be teaching in person will have a small cohort of students of no more than
  - 8 students for PK3,
  - 10 students for PK4 and K,
  - 11 students for 1-5
- Least complex model for in-person teachers, reducing burden
- Allows for most students remaining virtual to have minimal or no disruption to their schedules
- Maintains and prioritizes live instructional time

Disadvantages

- Reassignment of some students to new teachers: For in-person teachers, students they were teaching in Term 1 who are remaining virtual will be joining other all-virtual classes in the school
- Potentially large class size for virtual teachers
- Concentration of high-need students in one class may create additional instructional challenges for in-person teacher, though these may be off-set by small class size

Considerations

- If teachers were previously departmentalized, they may need to shift to teach all core subjects. Some schools may be able to maintain departmentalization if more than one teacher is able to teach in person in a given grade level (see model C).
- Students changing teachers will need a warm parting experience and a welcoming orientation to their new class.
- School teams can utilize Wednesdays for collaborative planning and LEAP leader support for teachers teaching new content areas.
- Consult Inner Core Guidance for additional information for inner core teachers in this model.

Supports

- DCPS has created PD resources with guidance on maintaining social distance while safely incorporating rich instructional practices into your teaching, as well as guidance on masks, hand-washing, and safe use of instructional materials.
- DCPS has created professional development resources to support teachers who need to teach subjects they were not teaching while departmentalized in Term 1.

Model B: One Teacher Instructs In-Person and Virtually All Week (Often with Support Staff)
Note: also called Combined, Simulcast, Concurrent or Homeroom Model

Overview:
Students come to school 4 or 4.5 days per week. Students learn content simultaneously either at home or in-person from the same teacher. Teacher teaches their whole class with some students reporting in school and the rest participating virtually.
This video shows examples of how teachers are organizing Combined classrooms for both elementary and secondary classes.

Best For:
- Self-contained special education classrooms with smaller class sizes, multiple adults and only one class of that type per school
- Schools who have at least one teacher per grade-level able to return to teach in person
- Schools with additional capacity (City Year, Urban Teacher Interns, educational assistants) to add a second adult to the Combined model classroom in person
- Schools where grade-level planning collaboration is already strong, to reduce the planning burden for Combined model teachers

Advantages
- Students in school can still interact with students learning virtually from their classes
- Teachers keep their original students and students maintain same classes for community and relationship building
- This model pivots to an all-virtual model easily if needed

Disadvantages
- Increased teaching and management responsibility to meet the needs of in person and virtual students (e.g. teacher alternates synchronous/ asynchronous engagement between the two groups)
- Increased planning demand for teacher as he or she addresses the logistics for both in person and virtual students
- May result in changes to virtual schedules
- Teacher wearing mask may be hard for virtual students to understand
- Virtual students may feel they have less "attention" from their teacher

Considerations
- For general ed classrooms, it is **highly recommended for there to be a second adult** (assistant) assigned to each class in-person. Teachers and assistants will share responsibilities for attending to the two groups with one adult always being logged in to virtual class.
- In this model, as teacher has to consider both in-person and virtual students, schedule consistency will be critical.
- Virtual students should not be expected to be logged on throughout the entirety of the school day but at consistent regular times aligned with the instructional blocks.
- During each instructional block, **all** students are logged on to their devices to allow for flexibility in instructional modalities (whole-class simulcast, small group, independent learning on and offline) and to ensure all students are supported equally regardless of location. This also promotes community and allows teacher to bring whole class to attention as needed, or check in with students at any time.
- Teachers will decide which parts of the day are best to combine all students (e.g. direct instruction, modeling, morning meeting, SEL, etc.) and plan for small-group and independent/ asynchronous work that all students will do at other times.
- Teachers should consider creating material distribution plans for virtual students to access the same materials as the in-person students (e.g. manipulatives, rulers, graph paper).
- Consult Inner Core Guidance for additional information for inner core teachers in this model.

Supports

- DCPS has created professional development to support teachers working in this Combined model.
- DCPS has created PD resources with guidance on maintaining social distance while safely incorporating rich instructional practices into your teaching, as well as guidance on masks, hand-washing, and safe use of instructional materials.
- DCPS provided technology to support this model:
  - Teachers may make use of Interactive Whiteboard to extend screens for whole-class simulcasting to share lesson or Teams view of virtual students, or to allow virtual students to view classroom.
  - Use of document camera (Elmo) to allow students at home and in class view of shared documents.
- Central Office has a limited supply of webcams to pilot in some Combined Model teachers' classrooms.

Model C: Two Teachers Rotate to Instruct 2 Days In-Person and 3 Days Virtually

Replace with Students come to school 4 days per week and have two teachers (e.g. humanities/STEM or English/Spanish). Each teacher teaches in-person 2 days and virtually 2 days. *Teachers instruct other half of cohort virtually.*

Best For:
- Schools who have at least two teachers per grade-level able to return to teach in person
- Schools that are departmentalized
- Dual Language schools where students need to receive instruction from Spanish dominant and English dominant teachers.

Advantages
- Teachers can maintain departmentalization already in place
- Teachers plan one set of lessons for two groups of students each week
- May work well when staff scheduling flexibility is needed
- May support deep content area work and learning

Disadvantages
- Students will receive ELA, Math, Science and Social Studies instruction only two days a week (though for longer time)
- Students will experience 5 calendar days between lessons of the same topic—may present learning and pacing challenges
- If you study ELA and Social Studies on Monday/Tuesday, you won't have the next lesson in those content areas until the Monday/Tuesday of the following week
- Students will have full days focused primarily on ELA/Social Studies or Math/Science which may be harder for them to remain engaged
- Student schedules will change

Considerations
- Collaboration needed between teachers to maintain consistent routines and practices
- With alternating content schedules, alignment to RCTs and formative assessments may need to be adjusted
- Consult Inner Core Guidance for additional information for inner core teachers in this model

Supports
- LEAP Leader PD to support deep content knowledge
- DCPS has created PD resources with guidance on maintaining social distance while safely incorporating rich instructional practices into your teaching, as well as guidance on masks, hand-washing, and safe use of instructional materials.

Model D: One Teacher Instructs 2 Cohorts of Students (In-Person and Virtual)
Students come to school 2 days per week (M/T or Th/F). Their teacher teaches A cohort in person M/T and B cohort Th/F. The days the students are not in school they engage in the Model B (Combined) with their teacher.
Best for:
- Schools with high demand for in-person learning time
- Schools who have at least one teacher per grade-level able to return to teach in person
- Schools with additional capacity (City Year, Urban Teacher Interns, educational assistants) to add a second adult to the Combined model classroom in person
- Schools where grade-level planning collaboration is already strong, to reduce the planning burden for Combined model teachers

Advantages
- More students experience regular in-person learning
- Small class sizes in person
- Classroom communities can stay intact with their teacher

Disadvantages
- Families may have trouble with just two days a week in school
- Teachers need to juggle three groups of students (M/T, Th/Fm and all virtual)
- Increased teaching and management responsibility to meet the needs of in person and virtual students (e.g. teacher alternates synchronous/ asynchronous engagement between the two groups)
- Increased planning demand for teacher as he or she addresses the logistics for both groups of in person and virtual students
- May result in changes to virtual schedules
- Teacher wearing mask may be hard for virtual students to understand
- Virtual students may feel they have less "attention" from their teacher

Considerations
- For this model, consider equity: If demand is high, which students are asking for a return to in-person school? How does that compare to which students have the greatest need for in-person support?
- For Combined model classrooms, it is **highly recommended for there to be a second adult** (ex. Instructional Aide or City Year) assigned to each class in-person. Teachers and assistants will share responsibilities for attending to the two groups with one adult always being logged in to virtual class.
- In this model, as teacher has to consider both in-person and virtual students, schedule consistency will be critical.
- Virtual students should not be expected to be logged on throughout the entirety of the school day but at consistent regular times aligned with the instructional blocks.
- During each instructional block, **all** students are logged on to their devices to allow for flexibility in instructional modalities (whole-class simulcast, small group, independent learning on and offline) and to ensure all students are supported equally regardless of location. This also promotes community and allows teacher to bring whole class to attention as needed, or check in with students at any time.
- Teachers will decide which parts of the day are best to combine all students (e.g. direct instruction, modeling, morning meeting, SEL, etc.) and plan for small-group and independent/ asynchronous work that all students will do at other times.
- Teachers should consider creating material distribution plans for virtual students to access the same materials as the in-person students (e.g. manipulatives, rulers, graph paper).
- Consult Inner Core Guidance for additional information for inner core teachers in this model.

Supports
- DCPS has created professional development to support teachers working in the Combined model.

- DCPS has created PD resources with guidance on maintaining social distance while safely incorporating rich instructional practices into your teaching, as well as guidance on masks, hand-washing, and safe use of instructional materials.
- DCPS provided technology to support this model:
  - Teachers may make use of Interactive Whiteboard to extend screens for whole-class simulcasting to share lesson or Teams view of virtual students, or to allow virtual students to view classroom.
  - Use of document camera (Elmo) to allow students at home and in class view of shared documents.
- Central Office has a limited supply of webcams to pilot in some Combined Model teachers' classrooms.

Step 5: Scheduling and Staffing

This process of scheduling and staffing assignments will be primarily led by the school leadership team in mid-December in order to notify staff in January. **Additional information in this stage is forthcoming as we want to deeply understand models and trade-offs, gather feedback from Community Corps to inform systems improvements.**